

# Information Bulletin

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**Title:** Forklift Operating Safety Practices

**Date:** October 30, 2006

**Identifier:** 2006-RL-HNF-0044

**Lessons Learned Summary:** The forklift truck is a versatile and efficient type of equipment involved in many facets of material distribution in the workplace. However, these capabilities also contribute to hazards which can result in severe injury and extensive damage affecting operators, pedestrians, vehicles, materials and the environment unless proper operating practices are employed at all times.

**Discussion of Activities:** On 10/10/2006, a two vehicle accident occurred between a forklift and a government vehicle in a laydown yard on the Hanford site.

A forklift operator, being assisted by a spotter, was off-loading new 4x3x8 steel waste boxes. They were being transported in a "two-high" configuration. The boxes were being removed from a tractor/trailer rig to a staging area at the end of the laydown yard near the main access gates.

Another employee was returning to the facility in a government vehicle (Blazer) and drove through the laydown yard's gate to return the vehicle to its normal parking location. When the employee driving the Blazer entered the gates at low speed and turned to clear two semi-tractor rigs parked just inside the gates, he encountered the loaded forklift coming toward him at a low speed.

The spotter attempted to gain the attention of the forklift operator while the driver of the Blazer (parked in the path of the forklift) attempted to place the vehicle in reverse while honking the horn. However, the forklift operator was unable to stop in time and ran into the front of the Blazer dislodging the upper tier box which fell onto the hood of the Blazer and came to rest on the windshield.

The forklift operator and the driver of the Blazer were wearing safety belts and no personnel were injured in the event.

**Analysis:** The statistics associated with forklift accidents provides information which



demonstrates the importance of always conducting forklift operations in a safe manner. On average, 260 forklift accidents occur every single day in the United States equating to 95,000 forklift accidents per year. These accidents contribute to approximately 100 fatalities.

Across the Hanford site movement of waste containers, materials, and other components using forklifts occurs daily. As such, the conditions identified in this event and others across the country are common to everyday work activities. Because these pieces of equipment are used so frequently, both management and employees can become complacent with their use. As such, all personnel working with and around forklifts must continually remember and apply basic safety principles associated with their operations.

**Recommendations:** During the week of October 16, 2006, FH Projects reviewed with affected members of its workforce, this occurrence. This was done to provide the workforce with notification of this event and to solicit feedback on recommended practices that could be applied to prevent a similar recurrence on FH contracted work scope. The following is a summary of the worker input received during these discussions.

- **Planning:** Ensure an effective and complete communication means is established between the fork-lift operator and the spotter (flag person) before starting work. For example, consider the use of radio communications.
- **Height of Load:** Discuss the height of stacked objects and their impact on the fork-lift operator's and spotter's view as a part of the hazard analysis.
- **Spotter Location and Travel Access:** When transporting objects which may interfere with the operator's line of sight, the operator should transport slowly in reverse (except up inclines), and utilize spotters positioned within their visible range.
- **Material Movement:** When transporting multiple objects, retain a clear field of vision by minimizing the load height for each trip.
- **Traffic Control:** When planning a material movement operation in a location where other traffic activity could occur; barricade, post, or otherwise restrict entry. Load and unload trailers a safe distance from collocated work.
- **Training:** Review Forklift Operator Safety training courses to ensure that the content of this training sufficiently addresses the potential hazards/risks associated with forklift operations.

**Cost Savings/Avoidance:** N/A

**Work Function:** Conduct of Operations - General, Work Planning, Construction; Material - Handling/Storage

**Hazards:** Personal Injury

**Keywords:** Forklift, Material Handling

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**References:** EM-RP--CHG-ANALLAB-2006-0003

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